



## Patriots Quotes 1/22: Bill Belichick, Tom Brady and more

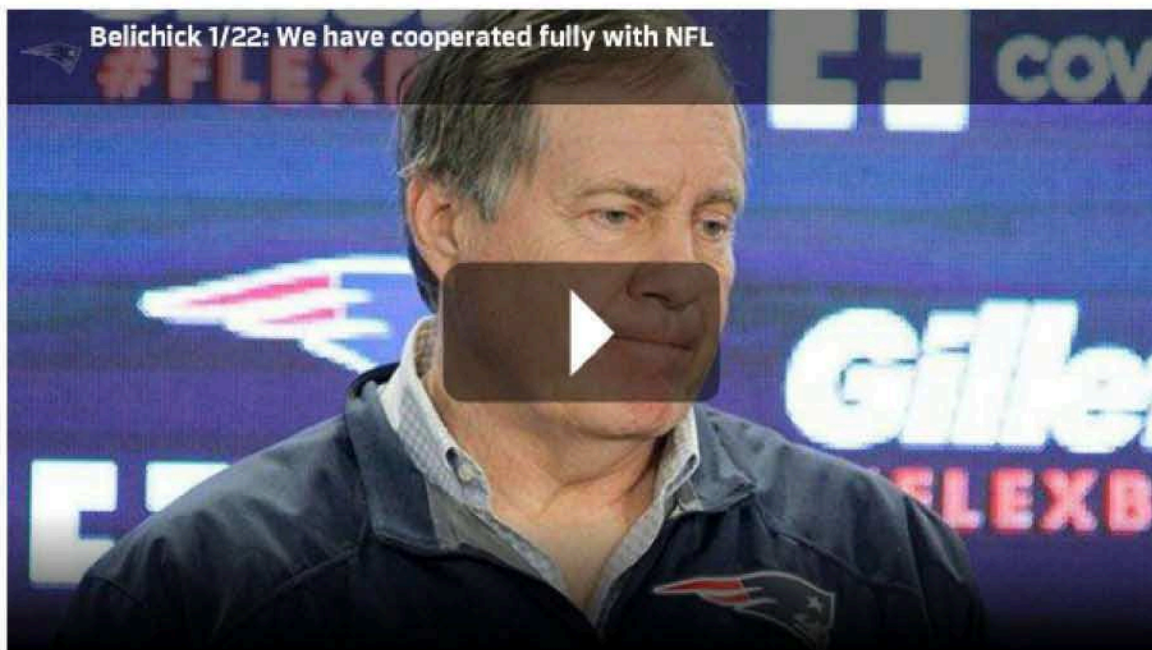
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*New England Patriots*

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Patriots Head Coach Bill Belichick addresses the media during his press conference at Gillette stadium on Thursday, January 22, 2015.

### HEAD COACH BILL BELICHICK



**BB:** I'll start out by addressing the football issue here. When I came in Monday morning, I was shocked to learn of the news reports about the footballs. I had no knowledge whatsoever of this situation until Monday morning. I would say I've learned a lot more about this process in the last three days than I knew or have talked about it in the last 40 years that I have coached in this league. I had no knowledge of the various steps involved in the game balls and the process that happened between when they were prepared and went to the officials and went to the game. So, I've learned a lot about that. I obviously understand that each team has the opportunity to prepare the balls the way they want, give them to the officials and the game officials either approve or disapprove the balls. That really was the end of it for me until I learned a little bit more about this the last couple days.

Let me just say that my personal coaching philosophy, my mentality has always been to make things

<http://www.patriots.com/cda-web/article-module.htm?id=633fa243-66b9-403e-8171-ecc91...> 1/26/2015

as difficult as possible for players in practice. So with regard to footballs, I'm sure that any current or past player of mine would tell you that the balls we practice with are as bad as they can be: wet, sticky, cold, slippery. However bad we can make them, I make them. Any time that players complain about the quality of the footballs, I make them worse and that stops the complaining. We never use the condition of the footballs as an excuse. We play with whatever or kick with whatever we have to use and that's the way it is. That has never been a priority for me and I want the players to deal with a harder situation in practice than they'll ever have to deal with in the game. Maybe that's part of our ball security philosophy.

I'm trying to coach the team and that's what I want to do. I think we all know that quarterbacks, kickers, specialists have certain preferences on footballs. They know a lot more about it than I do. They're a lot more sensitive to it than I am. I hear them comment on it from time to time, but I can tell you and they will tell you that there is never any sympathy whatsoever from me on that subject. Zero. Tom's [Brady] personal preferences on his footballs are something he can take about in much better detail and information than I could possibly provide. I could tell you that in my entire coaching career I have never talked to any player, staff member about football air pressure. That is not a subject that I have ever brought up. To me the footballs are approved by the league and game officials pregame and we play with what's out there. That's the only way that I have ever thought about that.

I've learned about the inflation range situation. Obviously with our footballs being inflated to the 12.5-pound range, any deflation would then take us under that specification limit. Knowing that now, in the future we will certainly inflate the footballs above that low level to account for any possible change during the game. As an example, if a ball deflated from 13.2 to 12.9 it wouldn't matter. But if it deflated from 12.5 to 12.3 it would – as an example. We will take steps in the future to make sure that we don't put ourselves in that type of potential situation again.

The National Football League is investigating this situation. We have cooperated fully, quickly and completely with every request that they have made; [we] continue to be cooperative in any way that we can. I have no explanation for what happened. That's what they're looking into. So I can't comment on what they're doing. That's something that you should talk to them about.

Again, my overall knowledge of football specifications, the overall process that happens on game day with the footballs is very limited. I would say that during the course of the game, I honestly never – it probably has happened on an incomplete pass or something – but I've never touched a game ball. It's not something I have any familiarity with on that.

Again, I was completely and totally unaware of any of this that we're talking about in the last couple days until Monday morning. Based on what I knew Sunday, Sunday night, thinking back on this, which I've done several times, [I] really can't think of anything that I would have done differently, based on what I knew then, based on what I know now. I told you the one change we would make in

the initial start level of the football pressure, but that's really about it.

It's unfortunate that this is a story coming off of two great playoff victories by our football team and our players. But again, we've been cooperative with the NFL investigation. We'll continue to do so and we will turn all our attention and focus on to the Seattle Seahawks, a very well coached, talented, tough, competitive football team.

We've spent the last four days, three days, with our preparations and so forth for the trip. I think those are coming to a conclusion. We're wrapping that up and we're starting our preparations today with the Seahawks and practicing through the weekend. We'll have a good, solid opportunity to get ourselves ready to go before we head down there.

Again, I have no further comment on the NFL investigation and I've told you all I know about the subject from my perspective. That's where we are.

**Q:** Aside from the NFL investigation, in your own investigation, did you find whether anyone willfully –

**BB:** I've told you everything I know.

**Q:** What do you say to your critics?

**BB:** I have nothing – I don't have an explanation.

**Q:** Notwithstanding what you've said here today, there are a lot people who are questioning your integrity, saying you will win at all costs.

**BB:** I've told you everything I know.

**Q:** What do you say to critics who are challenging your character, which seems to go well beyond the sport of football?

**BB:** I've told you everything I know.

**Q:** Any message to the fans who are watching all of this and are upset by this?

**BB:** I've told them everything I know. There's nothing else I can add to it.

**Q:** What have you talked to **Tom Brady** about? I assume you've had conversations with Tom about this issue and what happened.

**BB:** I have no explanation for what happened.

**Q:** Why do you think these controversies continue to follow you?

**BB:** I don't have any explanation for what happened.

**Q:** As many Super Bowls as you've been to, you know distractions come with the territory. What do you say to your younger players who don't have the experience being in this spotlight like this as some of the older players?

**BB:** None of them are involved in this.

**Q:** How do you keep them focused though, with all this going on?

**BB:** None of them are involved in this.

**Q:** Does Tom Brady handle the ball after inspection with his ball boys?

**BB:** Those are all questions that should be directed to the league and that's part of what they're doing. That's not what I'm doing.

**Q:** Is it possible that someone on your sideline, even though you may not know about it, might have deliberately altered the balls?

**BB:** I don't have any explanation for what happened. I've told you all I can tell you from my point of view and anything coming from the investigative side, from the league, needs to be directed toward them.

**Q:** Why would you want to overinflate the balls [in the future] unless you think that somehow it [deflation] happens naturally?

**BB:** So there is no opportunity for a small margin of error that would put us under the specifications.

**Q:** Do you see any circumstances under which 11 of 12 footballs could have accidentally deflated?

**BB:** I don't have any explanation for what happened.

**Q:** Knowing how much you care about what's going on, what's it been like for you since you found out about the investigation and what's it been like trying to deal with everything going on?

**BB:** Well as I said, I've learned a lot about the process. I had no idea how the balls got from the officials locker room down on the field and so forth and so on and all of that. That's not something I have ever thought or concerned myself about [on] game day. I've concerned myself with preparing and coaching the team. So some of the things like that that have been talked about, that have happened, I mean, I'm totally unaware of.

#### **QUARTERBACK TOM BRADY**

**TB:** Obviously I'd much rather be up here talking about the Seahawks and preparing for the Super Bowl, which we've been trying to do for the last few days. I know Coach [Bill] Belichick addressed it with you guys this morning and I wanted to give you guys the opportunity to ask [the] questions that you want. I'll do my best to provide the answers that I have, if any, and we'll go from there.

**Q:** When and how did you supposedly alter the balls?

**TB:** I didn't have any – I didn't alter the ball in any way. I have a process that I go through before every game where I go in and I pick the footballs that I want to use for the game. Our equipment guys do a great job of breaking the balls in. they have a process that they go through. When I pick those balls out, at that point to me they're perfect. I don't want anyone touching the balls after that. I don't want anyone rubbing them, putting any air in them, taking any air out. To me those balls are perfect and that's what I expect when I show up on the field. That happened obviously on Sunday night. It was the same process that I always go through. I didn't think anything of it. Obviously I woke up Monday morning and answered a question on the radio about it and that was the first I really heard about it.

**Q:** This has raised a lot of uncomfortable conversations for people around this country who view you as their idol. The question they're asking themselves is, 'What's up with our hero?' Can you answer right now, is Tom Brady a cheater?

**TB:** I don't believe so. I feel like I've always played within the rules. I would never do anything to break the rules. I believe in fair play and I respect the league and everything they're doing to try to create a very competitive playing field for all the NFL teams. It's a very competitive league. Every team is trying to do the best they can to win every week. I believe in fair play and I'll always believe in that for as long as I'm playing.

**Q:** Some people think Coach Belichick threw you under the bus this morning, do you feel that way?

**TB:** No, I think everyone is obviously trying to figure out what happened. I think that's the main thing over the last couple days. It's trying to figure out what happened. Like I said, I was as surprised as anybody when I heard Monday morning what was happening. I think over the last few days people have been trying to figure out – as the NFL is trying to figure out – what part of the process and from when I saw the ball which was five hours before halftime, what exactly happened.

**Q:** Do all quarterbacks doctor the balls and have you done anything differently from anyone else in the league?

**TB:** I'm not sure. I can only speak for myself. I think that there's a process that everybody goes through breaking in footballs. It's probably a lot like a baseball mitt when you're a kid. I try to explain that to my friends a lot. When you use it and that's your equipment, the football is something that I handle on every play. I want to be very familiar with the equipment that I'm using, just like my cleats, just like my helmet, just like my pads. You go through that process of breaking the balls in and getting comfortable with them. Of course I choose the balls that I want to use for the game and that's what I expect to go out on the playing field with.

**Q:** How important is it for you to get this out of the way and take this head-on so you can get focused on the Super Bowl?

**TB:** That's where the importance is, as far as I'm concerned. I know this is a very important thing and that's why I'm here addressing it. I know my teammates, we accomplished something really special getting to this point. I don't like the fact that this is taking away from some of the accomplishment of what we've achieved as a team. I think hopefully our best is still to come. We're going to work as hard as we can over the next 10 days to put ourselves in a great position to be prepared for the game.

**Q:** Do you know the difference between an under-inflated ball and an over-inflated ball? Did you

notice a difference in the balls used in the first half and second half?

**TB:** From the first half to the second half, I didn't think twice about it. I didn't put one thought into the football at that point. Once I approve the ball, like I said, that's the ball that I expect out there on the field. It wasn't even a thought, inkling of a concern of mine that they were any different. I just assumed that they were exactly the same: first half, second half.

**Q:** What do you say to the skeptics that say, 'The Patriots have had violations before. How can we possibly believe what Brady and the coach are saying now?'

**TB:** Everybody has an opinion. I think everybody has the right to believe whatever they want. I don't ever cast judgment on someone's belief system. If that's what they feel like they want to do, then I don't have a problem with that. I think part of being in this position and putting yourself under a spotlight like this and being open for criticism, I think that's very much a part of being a professional athlete. We can only express to you what our side is and how we approach it. Then everyone is going to make their own [conclusion].

**Q:** Are you comfortable that nobody on the Patriots side did anything wrong?

**TB:** I have no knowledge of anything. I have no knowledge of any wrongdoing –

**Q:** Are you comfortable that nobody did anything?

**TB:** Yeah, I'm very comfortable saying that. I'm very comfortable saying that nobody did it, as far as I know. I don't know everything. I also understand that I was in the locker room preparing for a game. I don't know what happened over the course of the process with the footballs. I was preparing for my own job, doing what I needed to do.

**Q:** A few years ago you said you liked the ball deflated. You were quoted saying you like throwing a deflated ball. Explain that comment in the context of what you're dealing with this week.

**TB:** I obviously read that I said that. I like them at the way that I like them, which is at 12.5. To me, that's a perfect grip for the football. I think that particular term, deflated or inflated, whatever norm you're using, you could probably use. I would never do anything outside of the rules of play. I would never have someone do something that I thought was outside the rules.

**Q:** So you never knowingly played with a football that was under 12.5-pounds?

**TB:** No.

**Q:** Have you tried to find out why the balls were under-inflated?

**TB:** That's a great question. I think there are a lot of people that have more information than me. I only know what I've kind of gone through and the process I've taken as part of the game and the postgame, as well as trying to prepare for the Super Bowl. Yeah, I have questions, too. But there's nobody that I know that can answer the questions that I have. I just have tried my best to focus on what I need to do, to be prepared for Seattle.

**Q:** If you know the look and feel of the football that you like, do you think there could have been other games where you played with an under-inflated football?

**TB:** I don't know. Like I said, once I'm out on the field, I'm playing. I have no thought of the football at that point. I'm thinking about the defense, I'm thinking about the execution of the play and what I need to do. I'm not thinking about how the football feels. I grip the football —

**Q:** Are you wondering if you've played with an under-inflated ball before?

**TB:** I have no idea. I have no idea. This was the first that I've heard of it. Obviously on Monday morning, was the first that I heard of it.

**Q:** If it's found that someone improperly tampered with the balls, is it important to you that someone is held accountable?

**TB:** I'm not the one that imposes [that] type of accountability. It's discipline and all that, that's not really my job. Obviously I'd like to know what happened, as you all would, too. In the meantime, I'm going to try to do the best I can to play against the Seahawks. Because I can't do anything with what's happened in the past. I have to just go forward with the most awareness I can going forward and trying to be the best I can be for our team.

**Q:** How does it make you feel that they're calling your team cheaters?

**TB:** You know, I think a big part of playing here is trying to ignore the outside forces and influences and people that are maybe fans of our team or not fans of your team or fans of yourself or not fans of yourself. Like I said, everybody is entitled to an opinion. Those opinions rest with those people. I think you can just go out and try to be the best you can be, deal with people with respect, with honesty, with integrity, have a high moral standard. I've always really tried to exemplify that as an athlete. I'll continue to try to do that.

**Q:** Does this motivate you guys?



**TB:** We've had a lot of motivation. I would say we've got a lot of motivation as a team. I think our team has overcome a lot of adversity this year. I think sometimes in life the biggest challenges end up being the best things that happen in your life. We've overcome a lot of those this year as a team. So, we can rally around one another and support one another. You can be the best teammate you can possibly be and you can go out and support each other and try to go win a very important game.

**Q:** Did you address your teammates today and if so, what did you say to them?

**TB:** Those are very personal things with my teammates. That was very personal comments.

**Q:** Did you see the footballs before they went to the referees?

**TB:** Yeah. It's always the same process. I get here – the playoffs I got here pretty early before the games. Then I go in there and I choose however many balls are necessary for the games. Sometimes it's 12, 16, 18, 24. This last particular game was 24. I felt them. They were perfect. I wouldn't want anyone touching those. I would zip those things up and lock them away until I got out on the field and an opportunity to play with them. That's what I thought I was doing.

**Q:** We're you surprised when you heard those footballs had been deflated by two pounds?

**TB:** Absolutely. That was very surprising to me.

**Q:** One of your teammates said this was a media thing. Is that your feeling? Is there a feeling behind closed doors that this is being blown out of proportion?

**TB:** No, it's very serious. This is a very serious topic. Obviously the integrity of the sport is very important. I think there's another focus that we have also as a team that guys are very focused on our opponent and the things that we need to do to try to be successful. Everyone is trying to figure out what happened. But at the same time, you have to prepare for the Seahawks also.

**Q:** You laughed this off on Monday on the radio. Now you're more somber about it. What happened between Monday and today?

**TB:** Look, that was real early in the morning. I got home at 12, one o'clock and woke up to do the radio interview and I was very shocked to hear it. I almost laughed it off thinking it was more sour grapes than anything. Then it ends up being a very serious thing when you start learning the things that –

**Q:** When the start of the second half was delayed and the balls were swapped out, how did you guys on the sideline not know what was going on on the field with respect to the footballs?

**TB:** I don't think anybody knew there was an issue with the balls. I think they said, 'The balls are not ready for play.' And then I turn around in the huddle and the ball was ready for play. So, I didn't think anything of it.

**Q:** Nobody said anything to you on the sideline? It was a good minute delay.

**TB:** I wasn't paying attention to what was happening at that time. I don't remember. Everything was happening obviously so fast in the middle of the game. I was thinking about the series, to go out there and the execution of the game.

**Q:** The officials didn't say a word to you?

**TB:** No.

**Q:** Do you feel like you had an unfair advantage over the Colts?

**TB:** I feel like we won the game fair and square. We ended up playing a great opponent and I thought our team went out and played a great game offensively, defensively [and] special teams. It was a great accomplishment to reach the AFC Championship, to win the AFC Championship and then to have the opportunity to play in the Super Bowl. That was a great feeling after the game. Obviously the next few days and hearing the football issue has taken away from a little bit of that, but hopefully we'll rally around one another to bring it back to the task at hand which is to try to go out and be the best we can be.

**Q:** Is this a moment to just say 'I'm sorry,' to the fans?

**TB:** I think it's disappointing that a situation like this happens. Obviously I'd love to be up here talking about [the game], in a very joyful mood. These are the two best weeks of the year if you happen to be one of the two teams still playing. It should be a great two weeks. I'm obviously very disappointed that we have to be having a press conference like this. I wish I could give you more answers or the answers that you guys were looking for. But I don't have some of those answers.

**Q:** For the fans that are watching and looking into that camera, what do you say?

**TB:** I'm not sure. What would you like me to say? I'm not quite sure.

**Q:** Does the league have a responsibility to button this up so everybody can move on?

**TB:** I think they'll do however they see fit. You know, I think that's up to their responsibility to do

whatever they want to do. That's kind of usually what happens anyway. Like I said, I know they're doing their investigation. I don't know what will happen after that.

**Q:** Do you feel like you're hanging in the wind?

**TB:** No, I think we're preparing for the Super Bowl. I think this is obviously something we're having to address, but at the same time, I think we're focused on trying to go out and beat the Seahawks.

**Q:** Did the league investigators talk to you?

**TB:** Not yet.

**Q:** You said earlier that first the issue seemed minor and then you became it was more serious. What was it that convinced you of the seriousness?

**TB:** I just wasn't, obviously, aware Monday morning of everything that had happened. So just as I learned more, you understand that there's more than what I initially –

**Q:** What's so serious about it to you?

**TB:** Just the integrity of the game. I think that's a very important issue to always be mindful of as an athlete, and fair play. I think we set a great example for the younger athletes, the younger kids, the college kids, the high school kids. We want to be the ones to set the great example.

**Q:** Are you frustrated by this process? Are you surprised by the process of what the story has become? What do you hope the end result is going forward?

**TB:** I'm not sure if I have a hope. I haven't put much thought into that. It's been just a short period of time. I'd really love to go out there and play a great game. Obviously the NFL would love to figure out what happened in this situation. I try to keep everything in perspective. I'm happy we have an opportunity to play in the next game. obviously I'm disappointed by the footballs of last game, but I can't do anything about what happened. I can only try to – I can only do something going forward.

**Q:** The league has not spoken to or contacted you yet?

**TB:** No, but they may. They may. I think that's obviously their choice.

**Q:** Do you find that odd though?

**TB:** Sure, yeah, they might. They might.

**Q:** It's odd that they haven't at this point. You're the quarterback and you're the center of this story right now and the league's officials haven't talked to you indicates to a lot of people they're letting this drag on.

**TB:** I'm not sure.

**Q:** Have you been told they will talk to you?

**TB:** I'm not sure.

**Q:** There are people who are going to say, 'You're so familiar with the equipment, how could you not know?' What would you say to them?

**TB:** I addressed that a little bit earlier. Like I said, I don't put any thought into the footballs after I choose them. When you're out there playing in front of 70,000 people, like a home crowd, you don't think about [it]. You're just reacting to the game. I don't certainly think about the football. I just assume it's the same one I approved in the pregame.

**Q:** Do you break the balls in during practice?

**TB:** We break them in in practice, certainly sometimes. Yeah, we definitely do that. It's different from game to game. Some days one ball may feel good; the next day it may not. It depends on maybe how, I don't know, the humidity in the air or how old the ball was. There are a lot of variables with obviously Mother Nature and the balls. Whatever feels good that day, those are the ones I would typically choose.

**Q:** Those are the same ones that Bill Belichick squirts water on in practice?

**TB:** Yeah, he does that a lot. It could be, yeah. It definitely could be.

**Q:** You said you didn't want the balls to be touched after you approved them. You didn't notice that 15 percent of the air was out of the ball when you started using it? It didn't strike you during the first half?

**TB:** I didn't feel any different. I would just assume that it was the same thing. Like I said, once I get the ball, I'm dropping back and reading the coverage and throwing the ball. I'm not –

**Q:** Basketball players would know if the ball was off after taking two shots. Baseball players could pick up a bat and know if it was less than ounce different. You're asking us to believe that you

couldn't tell 15 percent of the football was deflated and you didn't notice?

**TB:** I wouldn't know on a particular play. It was a very wet, cold, windy night. Like I said –

**Q:** But [Colts linebacker] D'Qwell Jackson noticed.

**TB:** I don't know. I don't do that. I get the snap, I drop back, I throw the ball. I grip it and I try to throw the ball. That the extent of me touching the football. I don't sit there and try to squeeze it and determine that. If that's what the Colts wanted to do, then that's what they wanted to do. That's what their decision was. But I certainly didn't. No, I did not recognize that. I did not feel a difference between the first half and the second half when supposedly they were inflated to the original or even more inflated. I didn't notice any difference. I didn't obviously think there was anything different between halves.

**Q:** When you initially tested the balls, did you think you would have noticed if the balls were under-inflated at that time?

**TB:** I don't know. I guess it's a challenging thing. I'm not squeezing the balls. That's not part of my process. I grab it, I feel the lace, I feel the leather, I feel the tack on the ball. That's really what you go for. It's not like I ever squeeze the football. I just grip the football. I think there's maybe a little bit of a difference of how I do that.

**Q:** What about the fact that you had better numbers after they exchanged the balls?

**TB:** Yeah. Like I said, I didn't think any differently in the second half as I did in the first half. I know we had a great second half. It was due to great execution by a lot of great football player. Like I said, I know that's obviously what they said. They inflated them. I didn't notice a difference. I wish I could tell you something different. I just didn't notice a difference.

**Q:** Bill Belichick said the team will inflate the balls over the minimum requirement from now on. Is that going to be an adjustment if 12.5 pounds is what you like?

**TB:** I don't think that would make much of a difference. Like I said, I didn't feel any difference between what was a 13-pound football or an 11-pound football the other night. That is pretty irrelevant to me.

**Q:** Will you lobby the league to change the rules surrounding this situation?

**TB:** What situation, what process would that be – about us breaking in our own balls?

**Q:** Making sure the balls are the proper weight throughout the game.

**TB:** Yeah, if they want to do that I have no problem with that. I certainly wouldn't want them to take away us breaking the balls in. I think that's a great thing for all the quarterbacks to have the balls in play that they want to use. Everybody has a preference. Some guys like them round and some guys like them thin. Some guys like them tacky. Some guys like them brand new. Some guys like old balls. They're all different. And it's leather. [When] every batch comes, they're different. You've got to feel them and you try to go out and you try to use the ones that you like the best, the ones that you use in practice. You want to go out there and try to have the most possible consistency you can to go in the game with.

**Q:** Will you try to get the league to change the rules so you never handle a ball that isn't the proper weight?

**TB:** Absolutely, if they want to check that, I would love for them to be at 12.5. Like I said, I think that's the perfect fit for me. I know there are other quarterbacks, like I said, that may prefer more than that, but that's what works for me. It's all a very individual thing.

**Q:** Is it possible the refs may have missed this?

**TB:** I'm not a conspiracy theorist. I don't know what happened. I have no explanation for it. I don't know what happened between the time that I touched it – really until Monday morning, I had no idea what happened with the balls.

**Q:** Who handles the balls after the refs hand it back to team custody?

**TB:** I have no idea. That's not part of my process.

**Q:** Is it a ball boy or equipment manager?

**TB:** I have no idea. I'm preparing for the game. I would never be a part of that.

**Q:** Who handles the footballs during the week? If you say you like a certain ball for the game, where does that ball go?

**TB:** The quarterbacks always, we'll throw the balls, and if we like a ball, then we throw it aside.

**Q:** Has the NFL contacted your reps, agent, anything?

**TB:** I'm not sure, I'd say that. They may or may not have. I'm supposed to talk to my agent after and

that may be one of the things that he wants to talk about.

**Q:** Have you seen them on-site at all here?

**TB:** No.

**Q:** Have you heard from former players or teammates about this controversy?

**TB:** I've had a lot of great support from a lot of people and I think in a situation like this, it's a very ... Like I said, sometimes some of the toughest things you deal with end up being the best things because you realize the people that you can rely on that love you and support you through something like this. I appreciate all their support. I tell them, 'I'm OK. Things are going to be fine. This isn't ISIS. No one's dying.' But we'll get through this and hopefully we can really start preparing for Seattle and get our mind focused there because they're going to take all my mental energy for the next 10 days.

**Q:** Do you think this got blown out of proportion for absolutely no reason?

**TB:** I think the integrity of the game is very important. Yeah, integrity of the game is very important.

**Q:** Have you reached out to the equipment staff to see if they did anything to the footballs?

**TB:** Yeah, and they haven't, and I believe them, and they also know how I like the balls, and I tell them how great they are before the game — 'Perfect job, great job'. So, they know how I like it, and that's exactly the way they are.

**Q:** You and Bill Belichick both said that you don't know what happened, though you are generally regarded as being two of the most prepared guys in football. If you were sitting here or back at home, would you believe that you guys don't know anything about how the footballs were deflated, or would you be skeptical?

**TB:** Everybody can have an opinion, and I think that whatever opinion people have, that's OK by me. I think I put myself in this position where I can stand up here and deal with that. I know what I go through on daily basis. I know the process that I take. I also know what's in my control and what's out of my control. I think a lot of my whole life has been about focusing on the things that are in my control and trying to do the best with that opportunity and the best I can with it. If I don't know something, I don't know something. I don't know what to say other than that. I just know the process that I go through and I'm very comfortable with it. Hopefully we can go forward and play a great game a week from Sunday.

**Q:** When you were driving home Sunday, is this the last thing you thought you'd be talking about in your press conference?

**TB:** Yeah, absolutely. Like I said, I had no -- yeah. Thanks guys. I think Stace [Vice President of Media Relations Stacey James] said, 'That's it,' about 10 minutes ago, so thank you guys.

**WIDE RECEIVER MATTHEW SLATER**

(On the logistics of the week)



"I think we were able to get all the logistical things out of the way, get our families situated and things like that. Now it's time for us to focus on football, and we've started going over personnel and things of that nature yesterday and obviously more today, and as the week progresses we'll do more and more and more. So, we just have to take it one day at a time from here on in, and our preparation is going to be key."

**(On dealing with distractions)**

"Listen, we have to focus on a football game and preparing for the Seattle Seahawks, and that's where our focus is. Obviously, there are a number of other things going on, but we just have to focus on preparing for the Seahawks."

**(On if it's hard to focus on the game)**

"I can only speak for myself and say no because this is the Super Bowl and this is a game we've worked for our whole careers, and it's not hard to focus on that."

**(On addressing the younger guys about avoiding distractions at the Super Bowl)**

"Certainly that's something that we have addressed and will continue to address. I think it's easier to get caught up in the hoopla and your families are really excited. This is not a vacation for us. This is not a celebration. We have a job to do, and I think at the end of the day that's what it comes down to and that's where our focus needs to be. As a team, to the man, we have to make sure we have our minds in the right place, our focus in the right place, and that's playing football and that's all that matters at the end of the day."

**DEFENSIVE BACK DEVIN MCCOURTY**

**(On how important these four days are before leaving to Arizona)**

"It's huge – to be in our normal setting, coming in, going to practice and doing what we do on a normal basis. That's kind of the easiest way to prepare and get ready to go. We can really take advantage of this time and get a lot done as far as preparing and having a little edge or a little step ahead once we go down to Arizona. It's a little harder once you get in a new setting. If you can take care of a lot of things and kind of be going over it for a second time once we get into Arizona I think that'll give us a big advantage going into the game."

**(On the importance of having good practices)**

"It's hard for any team, and especially this team, if we don't go out and practice well and execute and understand exactly what we want to do it's harder for us to kind of just turn that page going into the game. When we build up to it and just keep stringing good games that's usually when we've been better off. "

**(On having the team together for a week in Arizona)**

"It's always exciting. Obviously it's like being in college again, when we're all together again in one hotel, really maybe one or two floors and guys are hanging all the time, not just at the facility or at practice. We're always together. So it'll be cool. I think being in San Diego for the week will kind of be like this. It's just that this will be a little crazier with everything else going around out there. I think having each other will be big to stay focused."

**(On what he has seen out of Russell Wilson)**

"He does everything. I got to play against him in college and what he did in college he was able to still do in the NFL — whether it's buying time to throw the ball down the field, or escaping and get a big gain or even sit in the pocket and throw great balls from there. He's tough because he can do everything well. He's a guy I think that people probably doubted because of his size but he's proved that there's nothing at the quarterback position that he can't do."

**WIDE RECEIVER BRANDON LAFELL**

**(On the importance of these four days of practice before traveling to Arizona)**

"It's very important because these four days we are really working on ourselves and start putting the game plan in and get the basics down and when we get out there, the goal of everything is [to] just go over your final walkthrough of things to make sure you got everything understood."

**(On handling the logistics and ticket requests this week)**

"It's been crazy. I had to tell a lot of people no and you had to spend more than what you planned on or expected to spend, but it's for your loved ones and you're playing in the Super Bowl. Some guys only make it one time, this is my first time playing in the Super Bowl, hopefully play it one more time."

**(On playing against Richard Sherman and whether he's a trash talker)**

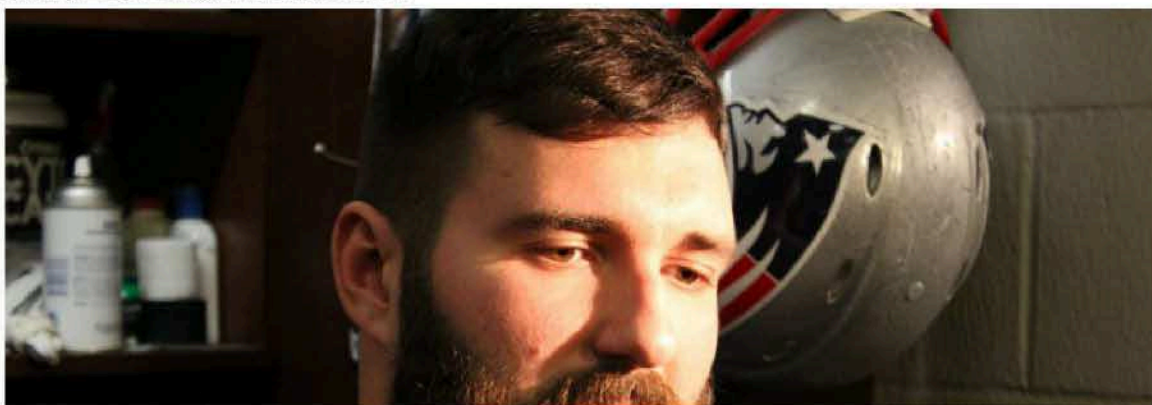
"I'm not a trash talker, so I'm not going to get into that with him, but he's one of the best corners in this league. He plays sound football – got size, got speed; never catch him out of place. He's a real good guy."

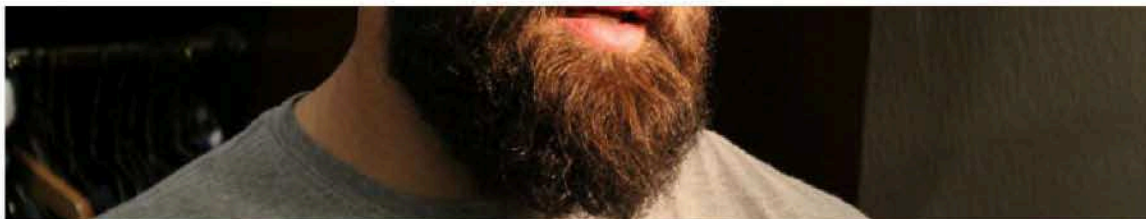
**(On what he's learned from himself working with Tom Brady and Bill Belichick for a year)**

"I learned that I've got to come out here and practice and give it my all every day. I can't take days off. On the game field, I've got to be exactly where Tom wants me to be or I won't get the ball. Sometimes you've got to go out there and do the dirty work that you really don't really like doing – blocking bigger guys and stuff like that. You've got to do it and you've got to be selfless on this team. One game you might get all the balls and the next game you don't. At the end of the day it's all about winning here."

**(On whether he is looking forward to the challenge of the Seattle secondary)**

"Definitely, it's the Super Bowl. You look forward to whoever you are playing."

**DEFENSIVE END ROB NINKOVICH**



**(On whether the defense feels like it is where it needs to be)**

"We're not at where we need to be right now. We've got time to get ready for the game, but again, just going into today's practice and the practices going forward, we have to have the right mentality as far as getting better and understanding the communication as a group."

**(On the importance of the team using its time to prepare properly)**

"You've got to be efficient in what you're doing with your time, especially right now. Looking at extra tape, looking at yourself, film of yourself and the things that you need to work at are key. Right now, it's getting better and everyone as a group – defensively, offensively, special teams – working to get better. That's what it's all about."

**CORNERBACK KYLE ARRINGTON**

**(On what Russell Wilson's ability to run means for the defense)**

"You always have to do a great job of what we call plastering and spying on the guy. If you decide to be in zone but if you're in a man, obviously, until the whistle is blown you've got to keep your eye on your man. "

**(On preparing for Seattle's offense)**

"It's always different things that you've got to prepare for week-in and week-out because every team has a different style of play. This will be no different. They bring an interesting style of play to the game."

**RUNNING BACK LEGARRETTE BLOUNT**



**(On if he wants to spend the rest of his career in New England)**

"I like it here a lot."

**(On his dad's playing days)**

"Growing up, I heard a lot of stories about how good my dad was at football, how good his team was and how he was the best player in his day and all kind of stuff. I wanted to be like him, and I wanted to be better than him. I made it to this level, so I'm the best football player in the family."

**DEFENSIVE BACK NATE EBNER**



**(On the opportunity to play in the Super Bowl)**

"I don't even know if it's hit me yet. I try not to get too overwhelmed with emotion about it, but it's pretty awesome to be a part of and I'm really excited and I'm excited for the guys in this locker room and our fans and just everyone who has been involved along the way. It's exciting."

**(On the work the team has put in to reach the Super Bowl)**

"I think that just proves working hard and coming to work every day to get better; it can really pay off. I think that's what's gotten us here today. It didn't just happen, we've worked a long time for this and now we've got a great opportunity."

**DEFENSIVE BACK DURON HARMON**



**(On how he has handled the logistics and ticket requests)**

"I had to take care of that. I don't want to be distracted. I know this is the biggest game of my life and I need to be totally locked in on the Seattle Seahawks."

**(On the mindset of not just advancing to the Super Bowl, but winning it)**

"It's very important. It's a game that needs to be won. I'm blessed enough to play in the Super Bowl, but that's not the ultimate goal. The ultimate goal is to win."

**(On what it means to advance to the Super Bowl)**

"It's a blessing. Some people go their whole careers without even playing a playoff game, but me, in my second year, I'm fortunate enough to be a part of a franchise like this to play in the Super Bowl."

**DEFENSIVE LINEMAN JOE VELLANO**

**(On going from the practice squad to being on the active roster preparing for the Super Bowl)**

"Yeah, that's kind of the business of the NFL – you don't know where you're going to end up. I'm very glad I stayed here and had an opportunity to just work in practice and be part of this organization."

**(On the advice he's received from teammates who have played in the Super Bowl before)**

"Enjoy it because you can play five years, 20 years, and you never know if you're ever going to go back, so you have to savor it as it comes and we enjoyed last week, that was a huge accomplishment. It'd be even sweeter to go out there [to Super Bowl XLIX] and get a win. Everyone is preparing to go out for a win."

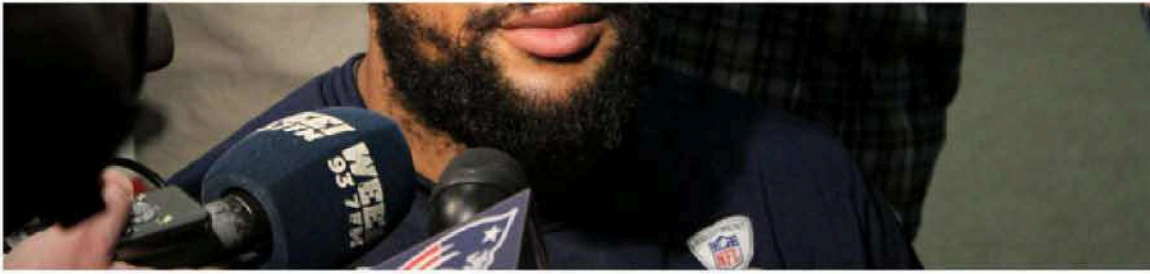
**(On juggling the demands of ticket requests from family)**

"It comes with the territory, but it's a good problem to have. We focused on it for a couple of days and everybody got it sorted out, but everybody is back on track for football and a big 10-plus days to get ready for these guys. It's a huge opportunity for us."

**(On what he wanted to improve on during his time on the practice squad)**

"Just [my] overall technique and fundamentals. You get a chance to watch other teams' players play and get an opportunity to try and learn from everybody. A lot of technique and a lot of stuff goes into it, so just trying to help out the offense and get those calls as well. Just be ready to go, really, and just get better in those weeks."

**DEFENSIVE LINEMAN ALAN BRANCH**



**(On Seahawks head coach Pete Carroll)**

"He's a good coach. He's a high-energy guy. He goes out there and gets his team focused and ready to go, so we're going to have our hands full next weekend."

**(On whether advancing to the Super Bowl was in his mind when he came to New England)**

"Not really. My main focus was just trying to help as much as I can this team get to where we wanted to go, so we just got another game and hopefully I can do my role in that, too."

**(On impressions of Russell Wilson and Marshawn Lynch when he was in Seattle)**

"They're great competitors. They both go out there and hate losing and go out there and compete. To the top of the league, there are not many people that play their positions as well at their positions as those two."

**(On whether he needs extra motivation for the Super Bowl)**

"I don't need extra motivation for the fact that it's the Super Bowl and it doesn't get much bigger than that. If you need more motivation than that then there might be something wrong with you."

**(On whether there's any extra motivation in facing his former team)**

"Sometimes, but for this game I'm just trying to keep my head focused on what I'm supposed to do at my position."

**(On whether he and Brandon Browner have anything they can advise the coaching staff about on the Seahawks)**

"I don't know what I could do to really help them when it comes to those types of things, but when the coaches ask, I will definitely be here to help them out."

**(On his experience with Pete Carroll)**

"It was good. I was only there for two years and he kind of broke me out from being in a background role and being a backup. I enjoyed my time there and I'm looking forward to Super Bowl Sunday."

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